

Establishing a State Education Office in the District of Columbia: A Plan for the Assumption of Four Mandated Responsibilities

I. Introduction

A. The Requirement for a Short-Term Plan

The State Education Office Establishment Act of 2000 (DC Act 13-387), enacted by the Council of the District of Columbia in July 2000, created a State Education Office (SEO) under the Office of the Mayor. An initial task of the State Education Office is to prepare and submit to the Mayor by February 15, 2001, a short-term plan for the transfer to and assumption by the SEO of four mandated responsibilities:

1. Exercising authority for all federal child nutrition programs in the District;
2. Verifying all fall enrollment counts for all public and public charter schools;
3. Formulating and promulgating rules for the documentation and verification of District residency for public and public charter school students; and
4. Making recommendations to the Mayor and Council for periodic revisions to the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula.

B. The Process

The plans contained in this document for the transfer of the four mandated responsibilities were developed through a process that featured broad participation by representatives of agencies with a stake in the outcome. The first activity carried out by the SEO consisted of a series of structured interviews with nearly fifty individuals, including officials from offices and agencies that are now carrying out state education functions; representatives of other offices that may also be affected by the transfer of state functions to the SEO; representatives of education interest groups that have been active in the public debate about the need for and role of a State Education Office; and individuals with special knowledge from research or experience about the effective management of state education functions.

The interview portion of the consultation process culminated with a November 9 “Stakeholders’ Meeting” to which all interviewees were invited. The purposes of this meeting were to thank participants for their cooperation, to report on some of the important viewpoints that were conveyed through the interviews, to explore through group discussion some continuing questions, and to invite further help.

In addition, for each of the four mandated responsibilities there has been extensive consultation between the SEO and the office or offices now performing each function. Although the nature of the consultation has varied depending on the function, the

common consequence is that the affected offices in each case had the opportunity to help shape the transition plans presented later in this document.

The process of preparing this short-term plan also included *benchmarking* current practice in the District of Columbia against policies and practices in other jurisdictions. To the extent possible, comparisons were made to jurisdictions having similar characteristics or facing similar circumstances to those confronting public education in the District of Columbia. One important aspect of this process was the identification, wherever possible, of best practice and an examination of the extent to which knowledge about successful programs elsewhere could be used to help the State Education Office make well informed decisions as it assumes responsibility for the four mandated responsibilities.

C. The Content

The Short-Term Plan describes the process that will be used and the steps that will be taken to transfer responsibility for the operation of each of the four functions to the SEO. Although the critical tasks associated with each function are briefly described, and projected completion dates are provided, this document is not intended to serve as an operating plan for the continuing responsibilities associated with each of the functions.

For each function, the following information is provided—

- Summary of pre- and post-transfer status, staffing and budget.
- History of the function and how it has been carried out in the past.
- Brief summary of the current status of the function, including where the responsibility now lies and how it is carried out.
- Description of how responsibility for the function will be transferred to the State Education Office.
- Factors with a potential for disrupting services to students and recommended steps to prevent any possible disruption.
- Schedule of key first-year tasks.

D. Certification of Performance

With respect to the Short-Term Plan submitted with this decision memo, the State Education Office certifies that, with one exception, the law will be observed, the budget is adequate to support the tasks, and the performance dates contained in the Act will be met.

An exception is noted because there is no provision in the FY 2001 budget for funds needed to meet the statutory requirement to enter into a contract for a fall 2001 census type audit of the enrollment count for all schools in the District of Columbia. Furthermore, the FY 2002 budget does not contain sufficient funds to conduct a census type audit per the legislation. This issue is discussed in detail in section III.C.

E. Provisions for Public Comment

An announcement of the availability of the draft short-term plan, a request for public comment, and the date and time of a scheduled public hearing was published in the DC Register on Friday, January 19, 2001. The public hearing was held on Monday, January 29, 2001 from noon to 3:00 pm in room 1030 South of 441 Fourth Street, NW, in Washington, DC. Copies of the draft short-term plan were available upon request from the State Education Office, as well as from the SEO website at *www.SEO@dc.gov*.

The draft of the Short-Term Plan was then revised to incorporate many of the suggestions contained in testimony presented at the January 29 public hearing and in written testimony received by the State Education Office by close of business on Monday, February 5, 2001. The revised Short-Term Plan was submitted to the Mayor of the District of Columbia on Wednesday, February 14, 2001. Additional copies of the Short-Term Plan may be obtained by calling 202.727.6436, by visiting the State Education Office at 441 Fourth Street, NW, Suite 920, or by visiting the SEO website.